

REGULAR MEETING AND PUBLIC HEARING
OF THE FALLS CHURCH PLANNING COMMISSION
July, 6, 2009
Council Chamber
7:45 p.m.

1. CALL TO ORDER: Chair Lawrence called the meeting to order at 8:32 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL:

Members Present: Ms. Hockenberry
Mr. Meeks
Mr. Lawrence
Ms. Rodgers
Ms. Teates
Mr. Wodiska

Member Absent: Mr. Kearney

Administrative Staff Present: Ms. Cotellessa, General
Manager of Development
Services and Planning
Director
Ms. Debra Gee,
Planning Specialist

Mr. Lawrence advised the commissioners that Mr. Kearney had e-mailed him prior to tonight's meeting telling him he was called out of town and sent his regrets.

Mr. Lawrence apologized for the meeting's late start due to a presentation by EDAW in the training room.

3. ADOPTION OF AGENDA:

Ms. Rodgers moved, and Ms. Teates seconded, to adopt the agenda.

Upon voice vote, the motion passed unanimously.

4. PLANNING COMMISSION REPORTS:

Mr. Wodiska on June 17th attended the CACT meeting. Primary focus was the Lincoln Avenue traffic calming case. Data was reviewed and there was very clearly a significant speeding problem in the area on Lincoln Avenue from Great Falls to the County line. Lincoln is a wide street and the 85 percent speed which is the metric used to determine whether there is an issue is at 36 miles per hour as opposed to 25. There will be a hearing on September 9th to give citizens an opportunity to voice their opinions about what is happening on Lincoln Avenue. He noted there have been many accidents and 183 tickets issued in the last two and a half years there.

Ms. Teates related she and Mr. Lawrence attended a reception at the Eden Center for the new Smithsonian exhibit in the former National Liquidator's site. The exhibit, which she recommended visiting, will be in place for another six weeks, included a film about the pain and suffering people went through leaving Vietnam.

Ms. Teates attended the June EDA meeting, a developer's forum on green building.

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There were several speakers regarding sustainability and how it works with economic development.

Monarch Construction Company representatives attended. Ms. Teates recalled there had been a presentation to the Planning Commission by Monarch about two years ago for converting an old warehouse building off of Hillwood Avenue into their company headquarters with the goal of it achieving Platinum LEEDS.

Monarch related construction had been held up by Fairfax County on a permit issue for 23 months but they were proceeding.

Ms. Teates also announced the EDA will have another developer forum tomorrow, Tuesday, July 7, 2009, at 6:30 p.m. in the training room which will continue the theme on sustainability and green building.

Ms. Rodgers reported on Recreation and Parks. The Frady Park Master Plan was almost complete. At Hamlet Park they had to stop work because they needed more land to do daylighting of the stream and there's been federal funding problems. It was postponed but would continue. The South Lee Street sale will contribute a small portion of land as an access route when it actually is sold. It's now up for public bid.

Ms. Hockenberry was glad to receive the information sheet from the EDA and asked if it could also be e-mailed and also to be informed if anything was being opened or a shovel being put in the ground in the City. As a tie-in to the EDA information, Chair Lawrence also asked if everyone was on the e-mail list of the Falls Church Chamber of Commerce.

Ms. Hockenberry reported the Arts and Cultural Task Force report went to City Council at their last meeting where it was very favorably accepted. They have to act on it and it will come back to the Planning Commission. While it was fairly short, it had some distinct recommendations.

With regard to the branding of the North Washington Street corridor, at one of the last meetings with the branding committee, a lot of information was given out and Smith Gifford was willing to do a presentation. She thought the Planning Commission should hear what was going on so they would know the background so when the report comes to finality, there would be input in between. In that regard, she thought a worksession might be a good idea.

Ms. Hockenberry also noted she recently observed a flyer stapled to a tree and wanted to know if there was information for business owners about what they could and could not do.

Ms. Cotellessa replied that was something they encountered not only on trees but on telephone poles as well which can injure the line men climbing up. That was covered by federal law but she said they would follow up on that.

Chair Lawrence attended the last Library Board meeting and found out that library circulation last year set a record and went up by 17 percent.

Chair Lawrence also announced Caroline Reich, the library director's assistant, was leaving to get her Ph.D. and would be moving to Canada. She has been a great part of the library and everyone would miss her.

Chair Lawrence wanted to draw attention to the fact that in the EDA monthly flyer the Commissioner of Revenue said since January 1, 2009, 72 new businesses have opened in Falls Church, and given the economic environment, that was very good to

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hear.

Ms. Hockenberry wanted to mention that Kay Wiant, an educational leader and teacher within the school system, passed away this past week. She was the Falls Church Education president for many years and did a wonderful job of working with the teachers, with the school system and with City Council. There would be a memorial service for her at the Falls Church Presbyterian Church at 7:30 this Friday, July 20, 2009. She said it was a great loss to the community and the school system.

Ms. Teates added Ms. Wiant was a VPIS board member and also helped out with the invasive removals at parks and the native plant movement. Ms. Wiant was an active community volunteer beyond being a great teacher and educator.

5. **RECEIPT OF PETITIONS:** None.

6. **PLANNING DIRECTOR'S REPORT:**

Ms. Cotellessa noted today was the first day with George service being operated by Arlington Transit. There were not many calls today and she hoped everything was going smoothly. Overall the experience with Arlington was they had been responsive, positive, and helpful.

Ms. Cotellessa reported the West End Park site plan was in for review and they have spoken with Akridge on the Gateway project coming back early fall. There were a few minor changes which Ms. Cotellessa would be able to approve administratively.

Ms. Cotellessa would be working with Chair Lawrence on putting together an agenda for the next meeting with the Economic Development Authority following up on Ms. Hockenberry's discussion about Smith Giffords' war room. She thought it might be interesting to see if they could bring to them some of the branding initiatives and fold it into the meeting with the EDA along with other things that would be on tap for that meeting.

She explained the whole branding issue goes to when you're in the City of Falls Church versus in Falls Church. On a daily basis they receive calls about grass in the medians, which is VDOT, in the Fairfax County portions of the Falls Church mailing address and that folks really don't know where they live.

Ms. Cotellessa also informed the commissioners the Arts and Cultural District and the branding district was moving forward. They would be put together in discussions as they work on the Comp Plan.

Ms. Rodgers inquired if the 1230 West Broad Street special use permit was the old "Chicken Out." Ms. Cotellessa acknowledged it was the BBT Bank where Chicken Out was and it's for a drive-through use. The Planning Commission would make a recommendation to the Board of Zoning Appeals on whether to hear the special use permit.

Chair Lawrence asked what was the site plan amendment on 800 West Broad Street that was withdrawn. Ms. Cotellessa explained the post office needed some kind of ramp in the back to bring in some of the mail. There were a couple of very minor amendments they were looking at making. They were able to incorporate those into the as-built site drawings.

Ms. Cotellessa noted when a site plan has been approved, when there were a few little things that needed to be done and if it didn't materially affect the plan,

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she would approve those administratively to avoid having somebody coming back through the site plan process which she believed onerous.

Those were little details which could be picked up and a record would be in the file. The as-built would capture the features that were on site. She wouldn't approve anything on an as-built site plan that anyone would notice. Examples would be a storm inlet moving because they couldn't get an underground pipe in a certain direction or a minor change of a doorway opening to match up with a sidewalk entrance, those sorts of things but nothing major.

Ms. Rodgers inquired if the post office was able to find a site for a drive-by mailbox. Ms. Cotellessa said they had not and it was her understanding the Post Office would evaluate that down the road when they've been open for a while.

Chair Lawrence asked if the parking at the old Post Office that was marked for Post Office only would be marked as additional public parking.

Ms. Cotellessa replied there was discussion about the interim reuse of the adjacent property where the 2 Sisters was. Any use that goes in that area would need parking. If the City can collect dollars as it's paying to maintain that property, it may be that some of the parking for those uses might be accessed on that site from the adjacent site as well.

She didn't know what the long term plans were but the Post Office still has its facility there.

Chair Lawrence asked what the West End Park improvements application by the City was. Ms. Cotellessa said a site plan was in that showed a skate park with a couple of skate ramps, a little picnic area or pavilion area. It was according to the Master Plan that was brought forward from Recs and Parks that was now going through site planning. They were currently trying to deal with some lot and fire marshal issues. The application is by the City to the City. The City goes through the site plan for its properties as much as any developer. It was all of the City's land and it was following the City's own process.

Ms. Hockenberry had discussed with Ms. Teates the many things coming in together that would really affect the Comp Plan that would need a lot of work and she wanted to make sure they gave themselves enough time to plan everything and really get their arms around all of the reports.

Ms. Cotellessa said she believed Chair Lawrence had asked that the first meeting in August be a review of the whole Comp Plan and ZOAC together. She thought they were looking between the two chairmen of the committees at four or five issues currently underway, one of which was the branding issue but that wouldn't be the focus.

Ms. Hockenberry thought they as the Planning Commission should have everything presented to them.

Chair Lawrence inquired on the commissioners' August schedules should a branding worksession need to be scheduled, and there was generalized discussion on individual schedules.

7. OLD BUSINESS: None.

8. NEW BUSINESS:

a. Recommendation to the Board of Zoning Appeals on Special Use Permit U-1471-04, an application for a Special Use Permit for a Group Home, in accordance with Section 38-16(c) (9) of the City of Falls Church Zoning Ordinance, at 209 East Broad Street, Zoned R-1A. The property owner is The Falls Church Presbyterian Church; the applicant is Homestretch, Inc.

Ms. Debra Gee present the staff report as follows:

The original application was filed in late 2004 by both Homestretch and the Falls Church Housing Corporation for the Special Use permit to operate a group home for up to six single women in the property known as the Ives House owned by the Falls Church Presbyterian Church.

The group home provides for traditional housing moving from homelessness to self-sufficiency. The original Special Use Permit was reviewed by the Planning Commission and recommended for approval. The Board of Zoning Appeals did approve the application for a one year period with an option for two one year extensions.

Ms. Gee's understanding was that Mr. Christopher Fay, who's now the executive director of Homestretch, was not a part of that organization at that time and was unaware that there was a term limit on that Special Use Permit.

The Zoning Division has recently undertaken a review of its files for all approved Special Use Permit applications and the period of time for which type of those permits was granted. During that review it was determined that this particular Special Use Permit had expired and the current applicant desires to continue operating the group home.

The owner of the property, Falls Church Presbyterian Church, has provided a letter of support for the application which was included in the commissioners' package. Ms. Gee noted the Planning Commission probably could expect more Special Use Permit renewal applications in the next several months.

The Comprehensive Plan for the City designates this area as residential and the Zoning Code under Section 38-16 (c) (9) provides for group homes by Special Use Permit in this zoning district.

Homestretch primarily provides its services at its office which is located at 370 South Washington; however occasionally case managers will visit the site and there is sufficient parking for both the clients and case workers on site.

The zoning division has not received any complaints since the group home for the subject site was first approved in 2004. The City Police Department has responded to ten calls at the site since that time. Four, as noted, were related to traffic stops that just happened to occur there; one was a process server, and another was a 911 hang up call. There were four minor incidents that had occurred at that site within the group home.

Ms. Gee reported that staff supports this application and recommends that the Planning Commission recommend to the BZA approval of the Special Use Permit for a group home for transitional housing for maximum of 6 single women, with the following conditions: That the permit be issued for a period of three years and that the applicant provide an annual written report to the BZA for each of the three years documenting whether or not there have been additional zoning or police complaints.

Chair Lawrence thanked and commended Ms. Gee on her staff report.

Ms. Rodgers asked if anyone was living in the group home currently and Ms. Gee acknowledged it was in use.

Ms. Rodgers remarked since it was a couple of blocks from her house she went by there all the time and she hadn't seen a lot of activity or seen any police hanging out there because of bad situations. She thought it was a good addition to the community and she would be willing to support approval of the Special Exception as a neighbor. She so rarely saw any people there, she thought it had been empty and that's why she made the inquiry.

Ms. Teates said she used the playground of the Presbyterian Church for girl scout and boy scout meetings and noted it was so quiet she had wondered if anybody was in there. She also thought it was a great addition to the community.

Ms. Hockenberry noted the home used to be used by the Presbyterian Church for Cambodian and Vietnamese refugees. It always has been used with a good solid social purpose and she admired the facility being used through the church and leased to others. She thought it was a wonderful thing for the community.

Chair Lawrence asked Mr. Christopher Fay, the applicant, if he wished to speak.

Mr. Fay, executive director of Homestretch, related it had worked very well for them and the intent was to have a very low profile because some of the women in there were victims of domestic violence and had been human trafficked. The fact that it is so quiet and no one knows who they are is to the advantage also of the people in the home.

Mr. Fay advised that Homestretch has found the church to be extremely supportive of their work, and they also found that the women in this facility succeed at a higher rate than their other clients and Homestretch already had a high success rate. About 90 percent go on and succeed, meaning they achieve self-sufficiency by the time they were ready to leave, albeit at a higher rate because they don't have dependents and can get by on a slightly lower income.

They've found it to be a very successful program. It was started as an experiment but they decided it was working.

Mr. Fay offered to answer any questions from the commissioners.

The Chair opened the item to the public. Hearing no response, the item was closed to the public.

MOTION: Ms. Hockenberry moved, and Mr. Meeks seconded, that the Planning Commission recommend that the Board of Zoning Appeals approve Application U1471 for a Special Use Permit to allow Homestretch to operate a transitional housing group home at 209 East Broad Street for a maximum of six single women for a period of three years with the following conditions:

1. That the permit be issued for a period of three years; and
2. That the applicant provide an annual written report to the Board of Zoning Appeals, BZA, for

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each of the three years documenting whether or not there have been any additional zoning or police complaints.

Upon roll call vote, the motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Teates thanked Mr. Fay for the information on Homestretch and found it interesting to learn about his program.

b. Discussion/Consideration of Activities for National Community Planning Month and World Town Planning Day.

Ms. Cotellessa provided information concerning National Community Planning Month and World Town Planning Day. This year's theme is sustainability and sustainable communities. She suggested two different types of activities: One, a program to involve the schools, and, two, a meeting of regional planning commissioners to have a "Meet and Greet" to talk about issues of common interest and maybe to look at what different jurisdictions were doing.

Ms. Cotellessa had spoken with Chair Lawrence about renting a space and putting on display each district's Comp Plans and supporting documents so other planning commissioners could see what surrounding and different jurisdictions were doing. It would be a venue to swap war stories, broaden horizons and start a dialogue with adjacent community planning commissions, particularly as to Comp Plan outreach and 527 reports for VDOT.

Ms. Cotellessa noted since October is Community Planning Month, this needed to be gotten out in September.

Ms. Rodgers inquired on the idea of getting interaction between the different planning groups, and wondered if that wouldn't be more on the staff level rather than a planning commissioner level.

Ms. Cotellessa was thinking of a Planning Commissioners "Meet and Greet." She knew Chair Lawrence was interested in starting a dialogue and she thought sometimes the best way to start a dialogue was in a social setting where it would be fairly relaxed.

While Ms. Rodgers thought that was a good idea, she wondered if the interaction would be mostly between staffs and would it be worthwhile for them to do something; and secondly, if Ms. Cotellessa thought they could get the other planning commissioners to attend.

Ms. Cotellessa related her experiences with several planning commissions in the Outer Banks where they did something similar. There was a nice reception held and it was an evening out. The planning commissioners were asked to bring their spouses, making it a social event and not an awkward work event. She related it had been a great success.

Ms. Rodgers asked what purview other planning commissions have; was it the same as Falls Church, did they have more limited or more active ways to go about things, and would they be able to interact on the same level?

Ms. Cotellessa explained in some cases some planning commissions had a much more limited scope than they did and others had a broader scope and were able to act on special use permits and special exceptions. Some don't get to weigh in on

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recommendations. But all planning commissions in Virginia had to deal with rezonings, zoning text amendments with subdivisions, with CIPs, and there were certain things that all planning commissions had in common.

Ms. Rodgers thought it was a great idea and just wanted more information, and Mr. Meeks and Ms. Teates concurred.

Ms. Rodgers also noted when she was certified as a planning commissioner, a requirement was to attend another jurisdiction's planning commission meeting. She thought it was really helpful to talk to other planning commissioners.

Ms. Cotellessa said she would bring back a list of potential ideas for the schools at the August meeting and if the commissioners had suggestions about locations, they could then talk about them specifically.

9. OTHER BUSINESS: None.

10. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: June 1, 2009

Ms. Teates moved, and Ms. Hockenberry seconded, to approve the minutes June 1, 2009, as submitted.

Upon voice vote, the motion passed unanimously.

11. ADJOURNMENT:

Ms. Teates moved, and Ms. Hockenberry seconded, to adjourn at 9:24 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Noted and Approved:

Ann Hieber
Recording Secretary

Suzanne Cotellessa, AICP
Planning Director

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